



Advancing Gender Equality in the Assembly of Albania

Report on the Participatory Gender Audit

Warsaw/Tirana, October 2025.

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1. INTRODUCTION

National parliaments are well placed to champion the objective of gender equality and promote gender mainstreaming, by responding to the needs and interests of both men and women in its composition, structures, operations, working methods, and day-to-day work. Parliaments are also responsible for producing gender-responsive policy outcomes, through decision-making and the adoption of documents within the competence of the parliaments, or indirectly through gender-sensitive oversight of the performance of the executive.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has a mandate to assist OSCE participating States in promoting women's political participation and to provide expertise and support to strengthen democratic institutions for advancing gender equality. The OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/04 on the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality tasks ODIHR with the following mandate:

- "...ODIHR will assist in the development and implementation of specific programmes and activities to promote women's rights, to increase the role of women at all levels of decision-making, and to promote equality between women and men throughout the OSCE area...", and
- "ODIHR will assist participating States in developing effective measures to bring about the equal participation of women in democratic processes and will assist in developing best practices for their implementation..."

In continuation of ODIHR's efforts to promote women's political participation and to further advance the level of gender sensitivity of democratic institutions, ODIHR is supporting national parliaments in conducting participatory gender audits.

ODIHR and the Assembly of Albania ("the Assembly") agreed, as per letter from 26 June 2024 from the Assembly, to conduct a gender audit of the parliament of Albania. By conducting this gender audit, the parliament is meeting its commitment as per Recommendation 1 of the 2022 Kigali Declaration of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Through the Kigali Declaration participating national parliaments commit to conducting at least two gender audits in the period of ten years (see also Appendix 3).

2. GENDER-SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS: THE CONCEPT

A parliament is gender-sensitive when it actively and in practice respects and delivers on gender equality. One of the earliest and most used definitions comes from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The IPU defines gender-sensitive parliament as follows:

A parliament that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its composition, structures, operations, methods and work. Gender-sensitive parliaments remove the barriers to women's full participation and offer a positive example or model to society at large. They ensure that their operations and resources are used effectively towards promoting gender equality. A gender-sensitive parliament is one in which there are no barriers – substantive, structural or cultural – to women's full participation and to equality between its men and women members and staff. It is not

*only a place where women can work, but also one where women want to work and contribute. A gender-sensitive parliament sets a positive example by promoting gender equality and women's empowerment among society both nationally and internationally. A gender-sensitive parliament is therefore a modern parliament; one that addresses and reflects the equality demands of a modern society. Ultimately, it is a parliament that is more efficient, effective and legitimate.*¹

A gender-sensitive parliament can also be defined as one, which “values and prioritizes gender equality as a social, economic, and political objective and reorients and transforms a parliament’s institutional culture, processes and practices, and outputs towards these objectives”.²

Parliaments are working organisations with rules, norms, internal procedures, and a specific gendered culture like any other working place; whether a member of parliament is a man or a woman in parliament makes a difference in terms of power and influence and this difference is exacerbated depending on other intersecting factors such as ethnic origin, minority status or identity, disability, age, class, sexual orientation and identity. Parliaments are, however, also very specific work places as they are symbols of democracy, representation and legality, and responsible for making laws, budgets and overseeing the government.

Gender-sensitive parliaments are not a simple nor static phenomenon. They have a high level of complexity and change across countries and across time. There is not a single path that leads to gender-sensitivity: one country may start from increasing the number of women members of parliament (also MPs as follows), while another may focus on creating more gender-sensitive parliamentary working practices. What is common for all is that gender-sensitive parliamentary institutions are more efficient in and able to respond to the needs of both women and men.

National parliaments are uniquely placed to champion progress towards, and full achievement of, gender equality in politics and indeed in all spheres. This crucial role for parliaments has also been well entrenched in international conventions and commitments. The 1995 UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, for example, required governments to report “on a regular basis, to legislative bodies on the progress of efforts, as appropriate, to mainstream gender concerns” (paragraph 109).

In the ensuing decades, the concept of gender-sensitive parliaments has become the clearest expression of parliaments’ responsibility to promote and achieve gender equality. International parliamentary organisations such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the IPU have been at the forefront of these efforts, having produced an evidence base as well as political texts that encourage further action in support of gender sensitivity around the world.³ Today, a number of intergovernmental entities, including ODIHR, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

¹ [Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments](#), Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017.

² Sarah Childs & Sonia Palmieri, “Gender Sensitive Parliaments: Feminizing Formal Political Institutions”, in Marian Sawyer, Lee Ann Banaszak, Jacqui True, and Johanna Kantola (editors), *Handbook of Feminist Governance*, (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2023).

³ [Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines: Standards and a Checklist for Parliamentary Change](#), Commonwealth Parliamentary Association 2020; [Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: A Global Review of Good Practice](#), Inter-Parliamentary Union 2011.

(OECD) as well as the United Nations, have dedicated resources to support the removal of barriers to women's full and effective participation in parliaments.

3. PARTICIPATORY GENDER ASSESSMENT: THE APPROACH

The purpose of the participatory gender audit is to help parliaments assess the degree to which they are gender-sensitive and gender-responsive in their key functions of representation, lawmaking and oversight, and to formulate recommendations to improve gender sensitivity within parliament. The audit applies an intersectional approach, understanding that women and men are very diverse, based on other personal characteristics.

A parliamentary participatory gender audit (hereafter also referred to as "gender audit" or just "audit") is an assessment, designed and undertaken by external experts, together with the parliamentary leadership, members of parliament, parliamentary staff, civil society organizations, and other relevant organisations. A participatory gender audit entails gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources to develop an objective understanding of current practices and processes.

Parliaments vary in their level of gender sensitivity and there is room for improvement across the OSCE region. Participatory gender audits are relevant to all parliaments, whatever the political system and whatever the stage of development. The participatory gender audit process is not intended to rank parliaments, but rather to help parliaments to identify their strengths and weaknesses in order to determine priorities for strengthening the institution. The audit provides a framework for discussion among members of parliament, decision-makers in the parliamentary administration and parliamentary staff. The approach involves answering questions about the policy frameworks and work of the parliament concerned.

The gender audit approach recognises that parliaments are both places for democratic representation and places of work. ODIHR's guidance document is designed to enable systematic and comprehensive examination of the ways in which institutional gender insensitivities mediate parliamentary interactions and outputs, across its activities. The audit includes both formal rules and procedures and informal practices, parliamentarians' and parliamentary staff's experiences and preferences, individual behaviour and collective interactions, as well as the wider parliamentary culture. Just increasing the number of women in parliament is not sufficient to make parliaments more gender-sensitive. Women frequently enter highly masculinised institutions where the formal and informal rules and practices reflect the behavioural and historical preferences of men who have long inhabited parliaments. In short, the audit process moves attention from women to institutions. Being a female member of parliament in an environment designed around and for men creates challenges and can make it difficult for women to achieve their potential in parliament and to remain as members of parliament for long periods of time. It also adds to the difficulty of encouraging women to consider a parliamentary career.

The gender audit of the Assembly of Albania has been undertaken based on the ODIHR methodology, elaborated in the publication "Participatory Gender Audits. A

step-by-step Guidance Document for OSCE Parliaments”⁴. The ODIHR methodology sets gender sensitivity within the framework of the three main functions of parliaments:

- representation,
- lawmaking and
- oversight

For each of the functions there is a list of standards leading the audit process (see Appendix 2).

The audit was undertaken on both the Assembly of Albania as a constitutional body, with legally mandated representation, legislative, and oversight functions, but also the Assembly as an institution, including its administration.

4. METHODOLOGY

The audit has been led and implemented by ODIHR staff and an external expert, with essential support from the OSCE Presence in Albania team on the ground. The audit involved quantitative and qualitative data collecting and analysis, including information from recent questionnaires, reports, legal documents, interviews and focus groups. Prior to the on-site visit, a desk review was undertaken on the situation of gender equality in politics in Albania and the efforts that have been made to increase the number of women in parliament, both as MPs and within the administration. In preparation of the gender audit, the parliament collected a set of data and responded to a pre-structured questionnaire (October 2024). Additionally, the parliament conducted a perception and attitudes survey among MPs and parliamentary staff (October 2024- February 2025). 134 MPs and staff members responded to the entire survey, however not all respondents answered all the questions. 103/134 of the respondents were women. 27/134 of the respondents were MPs, 104/134 were parliamentary staff and 3/134 were political staff (see Appendix 1).

A visit to the Assembly of Albania was undertaken from 28-30 October 2024. Interviews and focus groups were undertaken with 8 (8 women and 0 men) members of parliament and members of the parliamentary service. A one-day workshop with 31 participants (22 women and 7 men), on 28 October 2024, was held with the following objectives:

- Introduce the concept of gender-sensitive parliaments;
- Provide an overview of the international framework on gender equality;
- Contribute through discussions to the participatory gender audit; and
- Identify potential actions for parliament to take to become more gender sensitive.

Due to the limited number of interviews, focus groups and low response to the survey among members of parliament and parliamentary staff, this report is of limited nature.

⁴ [Participatory Gender Audits. A step-by-step Guidance Document for OSCE Parliaments](#), ODIHR, 2022.

Following the post-visit drafting process and verification steps, the present report has been finalised in September 2025, based on written feedback received from the Assembly.

Finally, it is important to note, that the collection of data and information ended at the beginning of February 2025, thus certain reforms relevant to the report may have been implemented between this time and the finalisation of the report. Where possible, these have been indicated in footnotes.

5. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

DIMENSION 1:

GENDER-SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

1. Representation is one of a parliament's key functions and "parliaments realize their representative function by reflecting the public's diverse experiences in decision-making", including through achieving gender balance in decision-making and removing barriers to women's political participation⁵.
2. Over time, international standards on equal participation of women and men in parliaments have developed significantly. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) calls on States Parties to ensure women have equal rights to vote, stand for election, and take part in formulating policy, including through the adoption of temporary special measures. In 1990, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) recommended in resolution E/RES/1990/15 a target of 30% women in leadership posts by 1995 and 50% by 2000. The Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe defined gender balance in Recommendation 3 (2003) as "the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political and public life [that] should not fall below 40%". In 2021, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) set a goal of achieving 50/50 gender balance in all elected positions. On 25 October 2024, the CEDAW Committee issued General Recommendation 40, defining in Para.2 equal and inclusive representation as 50:50 parity between men and women in terms of equal access to and equal power within decision-making systems.
3. Women's representation also includes women from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. Recommendation 3 of the Kigali Declaration (2022) calls on parliaments to "recognise the individual differences among women and prioritise the inclusion of underrepresented groups such as young women, indigenous women, and women with disabilities". CEDAW General Recommendation 40 (2024) reaffirmed that State parties must take an intersectional lens to gender equality issues and that women in all their diversity need to be "leading forces in legislation, strategies, policies, and programmes" in order to ensure truly inclusive decision-making systems.
4. The Constitution of the Republic of Albania states in Art. 18 that "all are equal before the law". It also affirms that no one may be discriminated against on the basis of their gender. In Art.54, the Constitution also contains a specific provision outlining that "children, young women, pregnant women and new mothers have the right to special protection by the state". Finally, Art. 64 lays out that the Electoral Code should guarantee "gender representation".
5. Of those surveyed MPs and staff, as part of this limited participatory gender audit, 67% agreed or strongly agreed that women and men should both have 40% representation in the Assembly.
6. Albania is party to the major international and regional human rights and gender equality treaties. Among others, Albania ratified CEDAW with Law no.1769 on 9

⁵ Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region, ODIHR, 2021, page 7.

November 1993. It ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) in 2013. It has been committed to the Beijing Platform for Action since 1995.

7. The CEDAW Committee in the latest Concluding Observations, published in 2023, noted with appreciation the increase in women's representation during the current convocation and that the mandatory quota for women had been exceeded in the majority of candidate lists during the 2021 election campaign. However, the Committee did express concern in Para. 27 that structural barriers persist in the participation of women in political and public life. They noted in particular that hate speech and harassment impede women's political participation. In Para. 21, the Committee also expressed concern over the "persistence of deep-rooted stereotypes...and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society, which overemphasize the traditional role of women as mothers and wives". In Para.28, the Committee recommended that Albania:
 - a. "Provide capacity-building in political leadership and campaigning skills as well as access to campaign financing for women candidates;
 - b. Adopt temporary special measures such as statutory quotas and a gender parity system... to ensure the equal representation of women, including rural women, women with disabilities, women belonging to ethnic minorities, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, in Parliament and municipal legislative bodies, the Government, the civil service and the foreign service, in particular at decision-making levels;
 - c. Strengthen mechanisms to prevent hate speech against women politicians and women candidates in political and public discourse, including online, and prevent harassment and threats against them, including strengthening reporting and monitoring mechanisms, requiring all political parties to adopt codes of conduct to promote gender equality and combat harassment against women candidates and activists and holding social media companies accountable for discriminatory user-generated content."
8. One of the main pieces of legislation in the gender equality legal framework, the Law on Gender Equality in Society of 2008, aims to address and prevent gender-based discrimination. It also defines measures for guaranteeing equal opportunities among women and men as well as the responsibilities of central and local authorities for developing and implementing laws and policies to promote gender equality in society. In Art.3, the Law specifically references that it is based on CEDAW, the Constitution, and other international acts ratified by Albania. In Para.12.a of the aforementioned Concluding Observations for Albania, the CEDAW Committee recommended revising the law in accordance with a commitment made in the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021-2030 to further the realization of "de jure (legal) and de facto (substantive) gender equality)". As reported by parliament, the law is currently in revision process.
9. In addition to the Law on Gender Equality in Society, the Law on Protection Against Discrimination of 2010 enshrines the right of every person to equality before the law and equal protection by law as well as the right to equal opportunities, the right to equal freedoms and participation in public life, and the right to protection from every form of conduct that is discriminatory. It was amended in 2020 to align further with the EU *acquis communautaire*. Art.7.3 obliges public authorities to "promote equality and prevent discrimination in the exercise of their functions". Art. 9 is titled

Participation in Politics and asserts that “discrimination in the exercise of the right to choose, to be elected, and to be appointed in public office, is prohibited”.

10. The government has stated that they will present amendments to the Law on Gender Equality in Society to the Assembly before the end of the current convocation. However, all interviewees maintained that it is highly unlikely that this will be possible.
11. Albania currently has a National Strategy for Gender Equality. The National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030 is the fourth such strategy of its kind. It contains measures and actions that are combined or related to those envisioned by the EU’s Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2025. The Strategy aims to fulfil obligations from CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, and the Beijing Platform for Action. Strategic Goal II of the Strategy is to ensure the equal participation, representation, and leadership of women and men, young women and men, girls and boys in political and public decision making at the local level. The still currently active National Strategy for Development and Integration 2014-2020 also includes improving women’s participation in politics and decision-making as a strategic goal. Since 2018, Albania has had two Action Plans on the implementation of UNSC Resolution “On Women, Peace, and Security” (WPS). The current plan for 2023-2027 includes an objective on increasing the number of activities in the Assembly for the WPS agenda.
12. However, the most recent report by the European Commission’s Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) concluded that the implementation of both the National Strategy for Gender Equality and the Law on Gender Equality in Society needs to be intensified.⁶
13. The Assembly of Albania is formed of 140 MPs, who are elected using a proportional election system and a national threshold, as per Art. 64 of the Constitution. The Electoral Code was modified in July 2020 towards a more proportional system.⁷ Under the new system, voters cast preferential votes in one of twelve multi-member districts. Art.75 of the Electoral Code outlines that the number of seats allocated to each district depends on the number of citizens registered within each district. The amendments introduced a national threshold of 1%. They also stipulated a minimum number of candidates on party lists and allowed leaders of political parties to stand as candidates in up to four electoral districts.⁸
14. According to Art. 65 of the Constitution, elections take place in Albania every four years. Seat allocation is determined by a candidate’s position on the list but preferential voting allows voters to affect the ranking of candidates on a given list. The last parliamentary elections took place in Albania on 25 April 2021. The ODIHR Election Observation Report concluded that “the process was largely transparent and smooth”.
15. In Art.3.3, the Electoral Code states unequivocally that “every Albanian citizen who has turned 18 years old, even on election day, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, language, political conviction, belief, physical ability, or economic situation has the

⁶ [Albania 2023 Report](#), European Commission Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 8 November 2023.

⁷ Additionally, the Electoral Code was also amended in July 2024 with Law no. 81/2024 and in February 2025 with Law no. 10/2025.

⁸ [ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report: Republic of Albania Parliamentary Elections](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 26 July 2021.

right to choose and to be elected”. As mentioned, the Electoral Code was amended in June 2020. At this time, many provisions related to gender equality were added or amended. Most of these amendments came as a result of recommendations by a Working Group on Gender and Equality in Decision-Making or on the initiative of the Alliance of Women MPs. The Working Group also proposed a 50% electoral quota but this did not form part of the amendments made to the Electoral Code. ODIHR concluded that these reforms were accomplished based on “wide political consensus” and as a result of an “inclusive consultative process”.⁹

16. Art. 4 of the Code (an article which was amended in June 2020) is entitled Electoral Law and Gender Equality and explicitly stipulates that “the direct and active participation in political and public life of the underrepresented gender constitutes a fundamental instrument in the consolidation of the democratic system” (Art.4.1). Art.4.3.a lays out the electoral quota of 30%. Art.4.3.c states that electoral bodies must draft and publish statistics on the participation of the underrepresented gender on election day.
17. This is further elaborated in Art.67.6, which outlines that, for the candidate lists in each constituency, one in every three names must belong to the underrepresented gender and one in every three candidates on the preferential voting list shall also belong to the less represented gender. Art.163.2 affirms that, when voting lists are re-ordered after preferential voting, one in every three names must remain as belonging to the underrepresented gender. These provisions were both amended in 2024, following ODIHR’s recommendation (Recommendation 15) in the report for the 2021 elections that “considerations could be given to revising provisions related to the sequencing of candidates of different genders” on candidate lists, as it was unclear at the time of the election.¹⁰ Interviewees during the on-site visit highlighted that the Alliance of Women MPs was crucial to the passing of this amendment.
18. The sanction for not following the quota is refusal to register the candidate list by the Central Election Commission (CEC) (Art.175, Electoral Code). This was amended in 2020, as the previous sanction was a fine. This has been praised by several international observers as being a much stronger and more robust sanction as before political parties would often choose to pay the fine.¹¹ The CEC has reportedly issued such sanctions for failure to comply with the gender quota.¹²
19. Albania published its first, and so far only, Gender Equality Index (GEI) in January 2020, as per the methodology of the European Institute of Gender Equality. In the GEI, Albania ranked below the EU-28 in all domains except the domain of power, which includes women’s political power. Here, Albania is ranked 6th among all the countries reporting on the GEI. This is as a result of the high representation of women in political and economic power. However, this was more due to women’s representation in regional assemblies and ministerial positions rather than in parliament. It should be noted that this assessment was done before the 2021 elections.¹³

⁹ ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report, 2021, page 1.

¹⁰ Ibid., page 27.

¹¹ See Albania Country Gender Equality Brief 2020, UN Women Albania, December 2020, and Violence against women during elections (VAWE) and gender bias in media coverage of the 2021 elections in Albania, UN Women, November 2021.

¹² Comprehensive National-Level Review, 2024.

¹³ Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania, 2020.

20. The Assembly has 50 women MPs in the current convocation, making up 35.7% of seats. This is an increase from the previous convocation where there were 41 women MPs, comprising 29.3% of seats.¹⁴ This places Albania higher, in terms of the representation of women in parliament, than the European average of 31%.¹⁵
21. The Rules of Procedure do not contain any provisions on gender balance among parliamentary leadership, committee chairs and composition, parliamentary delegations' chairs and compositions, or the parliamentary administration. According to Art.21.1 of the Rules of Procedure, committee chairs are nominated and elected by the Assembly.
22. The Speaker of the Assembly is a woman. Out of the ten Speakers since the introduction of multiparty elections in Albania in 1991, three have been women. Women currently make up the majority of committee chairs. The following data was reported by the Assembly in October 2024:

Position	Male	%	Female	%
Speaker and Deputy Speakers	2	66.7%	1	33.3%
Committee chairs	3	37.5%	5	63.5%
Deputy committee chairs	6	50%	6	50%
Head of party factions	3	75%	1	25%
Deputy heads of party factions	3	42.9%	4	57.1%
Secretary General	1	100%	0	0%

23. A central aspect of parliamentary representation is gender-balanced representation in parliamentary committees. As also documented by ODIHR's OSCE-wide study¹⁶, parliamentary committees in Albania partially conform to the stereotypical distribution of policy areas among women and men. The following data has been reported by the Assembly in October 2024:

Committee	% of women	% of men
Legal Issues, Public Administration and Human Rights	28.6	71.4
European Issues	50	50
Foreign Policy	29.4	70.6
Economy and Finance	42.9	57.1
National Security	18.2	81.8
Productive Activity, Trade and Environment	16.7	83.3
Labour, Social Issues and Health	60	40
Education and Public Information Media	70	30
All Committees overall	39.5	60.5

24. The Rules of Procedure (Art.19) specify that the Committee on Labour, Social Issues, and Health is responsible for "labour relations, social issues, social insurance, the family, women, and health" In October 2024, the Parliament stated that there are four bodies currently responsible for gender equality work in

¹⁴ Comprehensive National-Level Review for Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Republic of Albania, 1 June 2024.

¹⁵ Women in Politics: 2023, UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1 January 2023.

¹⁶ Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament, ODIHR, 2021, page 26.

parliament, including three formal bodies: the Committee on Labour, Social Issues, and Health; the Subcommittee “On Human Rights”; and the Subcommittee “For Sustainable Development”; as well as one informal body, the Alliance of Women MPs.

25. In the previous convocation, the Committee for Labour, Social Issues, and Health had a Subcommittee on Gender Equality and the Prevention of Violence Against Women. This body was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and reporting on the situation of domestic violence and discrimination against women.¹⁷ The current National Strategy implies that it is still active, when in reality it is not.¹⁸ The sub-committee was not re-established in the current convocation. Unlike some other sub-committees, re-establishment relied on political will for its formation as it is not in the Rules of Procedure.
26. The Alliance of Women MPs was set up in 2013 to promote gender equality in parliament and to include a gender equality perspective in legislation. The 2023 Annual Report of the Assembly reported that the Alliance has 50 members. The report also listed some activities of the Alliance in 2023, such as: hosting the OSCE Secretary General, participation in events organized by international organizations on ending violence against women in Albania and the role of political parties in gender equality work, and participation in events organized within parliament on breast-cancer awareness and ending femicide. All the women MPs interviewed stated that the Alliance is not currently working effectively due to partisan issues, creating barriers for cross-party collaboration on gender issues.
27. The Law on Political Parties of 2000 does not contain any provisions on gender equality; however, the Law on Gender Equality in Society of 2008 obliges all political parties to define methods and measures to achieve equal participation and representation in Art.15.2.
28. The three parties currently with the largest representation in parliament, the Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, and the Freedom Party, all have internal quotas between 30 and 50%, although according to data gathered during the on-site visit these are not always implemented or met.¹⁹ The majority of parties have party-specific women’s networks.
29. The ODIHR Election Monitoring Mission noted in 2021 that “the main parties all attempted to increase the visibility of women as candidates in the campaign, and the mandatory quota for women was exceeded in most candidate lists”.²⁰ For example: women made up half of the candidate lists for the Socialist Movement for Integration Party, leading to 50-50 representation in parliament. The leader of the Democratic Party also presented a programme on gender equality and at the Socialist Party campaign launch, 11 out of 14 speeches were delivered by women. According to the final report, women candidates only received 19% of the campaign coverage in the news and current affairs programmes in the media monitored by ODIHR. In order to combat discrimination and hate speech during

¹⁷ Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania, 2020.

¹⁸ National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030, 2021.

¹⁹ Violence against women during elections (VAWE) and gender bias in media coverage of the 2021 elections in Albania, 2021.

²⁰ ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report, 2021, page 2.

the electoral process, a Code of Conduct for Political Parties has been drawn up under the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination.²¹

30. A report by UN Women on the 2021 elections signalled the need for political parties to more thoroughly integrate gender equality into their political programmes. The study also found that the role and influence of women's forums within Albanian political parties could be strengthened as it remains largely symbolic.²²
31. The parliament does not monitor the participation rates of women and men MPs, or on how often, when and for how long they speak, in the plenary session or committee meetings, during law-making or oversight activities. According to information provided by the Assembly in October 2024, the procedural rules have not been reviewed to increase opportunities for women parliamentarians to speak or participate in the chamber. The Assembly reports and publishes statistical data on the number of legal initiatives, motions, amendments, questions to the government proposed or put forward by MPs but does not collect sex-disaggregated data.
32. The parliament does report sex-disaggregated statistical data in the Annual Report on the gender of MPs looking for research products. In the 2023 Annual Report, it was published that 78% of MPs seeking research products were women.
33. The Labour Code of 1995 outlines in Art.115.1 that women and men who perform equally valuable work will be given the same salary. It also lays out the working conditions for pregnant women and provisions on maternity leave in Art.104-108. However, while the Labour Code in Art. 104 prohibits pregnant women from working 35 days before their due date and 63 days after delivery, unless they are expecting more than one child. In that case, they are prohibited from working 60 days before their due date.
34. According to data presented by the Assembly, 66% of administration staff are women. The majority of directors in the parliamentary administration are women.
35. The Assembly reported that, in their appointment function, efforts are made to ensure gender balance when appointing candidates to boards, commissions, and constitutional institutions. In the previous convocation of the Assembly, out of 41 appointments, 23 were women.
36. Recommendation 9 of the Kigali Declaration calls on parliaments to "become caring parliaments by fully providing for the caring needs of men and women MPs and staff as they carry out their parliamentary duties". The Assembly has yet to discontinue night sittings and sittings are not aligned with the school calendar. There are no childcare facilities in the parliament, nor family rooms or flexible working hours. There are also no measures in place for alternate voting arrangements for parliamentarians with care responsibilities. There are future plans to open a kindergarten in parliament.
37. Recommendation 10 of the Kigali Declaration urges parliaments to "introduce stringent policies with the objective of zero tolerance of violence against women, sexual harassment and bullying in parliament, and establish independent and efficient grievance procedures with strong sanctions". Members of parliament must follow the parliamentary Code of Conduct, that regulates issues related to their behaviour. Art. 5 and Art. 6 of the Code of Conduct contain provisions on discrimination, with Art.6.2 specifically mentioning gender discrimination. Art.6.1,

²¹ ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report, 2021.

²² Ibid.

Art.7.1, and Art.7.2.b cover violent behaviour and language and Art.10 relates to sexual harassment. Art.10.2 states that “the MP strives to ensure and maintain a working environment free of sexual harassment. They react immediately, report, request a case to be recorded and investigated when they receive knowledge of any sexual harassment claim, enabling the victim of sexual harassment not to be intimidated, denigrated, and have her claim ignored”.

Art. 7.4 of the Code outlines that “the Assembly creates opportunities for women and Assembly staff, who have new-born children, to participate in parliamentary work. The Assembly constantly reviews the conditions and working culture. The Assembly provides equal opportunities for everyone, both for the MP and support staff”. Art. 31 outlines that the Bureau of the Assembly is responsible for implementing the Code. The Law on the Status of MPs does not contain any relevant provisions related to gender equality or violence against women in politics.

38. The Bureau of the Assembly has also published a Guide to the provisions of the Code of Conduct. The Guide emphasizes that integrity means avoiding discrimination, including on the basis of gender (Art.2.c). In Art.4, it also defines offensive or threatening language as that which incites hatred and discrimination. It does not contain any guidelines on Art. 10 of the Code of Conduct, which covers sexual harassment.
39. The Rules of Procedure in Art. 64 defines disciplinary measures for violating the Code of Conduct. Violations of Art.6 on discrimination result in “drawing attention”, which is the weakest sanction, unless repeated. When an MP continues to use offensive or bigoted language, they are sanctioned by the removal of the right to speak (Art.64.2). An MP is excluded for 30 days if they use violence against a fellow MP or member of the parliamentary staff (Art.65.6.a). In cases of sexual harassment, an MP can be expelled from participating in the plenary or committees for up to 10 days (Art.65.1.c). The sexual harassment procedure is loosely outlined in Art. 64.4 and 64.5, with the provision that the victim of sexual harassment must submit a complaint to have a disciplinary measure taken against the perpetrator. However, Art. 64.2.3 explicitly states that in cases of sexual harassment, investigations of violations must be “organized in a way that preserves the sensitivity/private life of the person/victim”. In addition, Art.65.2.5 states, that while all disciplinary decisions are usually published on the Assembly website, in cases of sexual harassment they are only published at the victim’s’ discretion. The Bureau of the Assembly, specifically the ethics secretariat, is mandated to examine and decide on applying disciplinary measures, according to Art.11 of the Rules of Procedure.
40. A study by UN Women on Violence Against Women during Elections (VAWE) also found that women MPs in Albania regularly face harassment and attacks. It also outlined several prominent stereotypes and shared conceptions currently working against gender equality in Albanian politics, such as that women are fragile and should be confined to the domestic sphere; that women are not strong enough to participate in politics due to the stereotype of the politician as a “strong man”; and that the political environment is “rough” and “unsuitable for women” due to the language and behaviour used. The study identified several cases of VAWE during

the 2021 elections, including psychological abuse, threats, and coercion towards women standing as candidates.²³

41. UNDP Albania published a similar study on Violence Against Women in Politics, which found that most women in politics saw the main perpetrator of political violence as coming from within their own political parties. 55.6% of women surveyed in the study answered that degrading talk and false rumours were a normal part of politics, 42.16% that intimidation and violence were normal, 30.16% that threats against politicians are normal, and 6.86% that physical violence is normal.²⁴
42. All of the women MPs interviewed expressed that sexist language and attacks were a regular occurrence in parliament. MPs reported that they have faced personal attacks as well as attacks on their family. They additionally stated that the Code of Conduct and enforcement mechanisms are never used to address violence against women in politics. There were reports of women reporting such behaviour but those reports were left unaddressed.
43. 52% of those surveyed strongly disagreed that sexist language is used in parliament. Only 13% strongly agreed with the statement. This is a significant contrast to the data collected during interviews and by international organizations.
44. The Law on Gender Equality in Society in Art.13.e states that the Minister for Health and Social Protection must provide trainings and awareness raising activities for public administration employees, specifically “on the concept of gender equality, non-discrimination of women, elimination of gender stereotypes, the proper understanding of the role of women and men, of the mother and father in the family and in society”. These activities are not currently being done, according to data collected during the on-site visit.
45. The Parliamentary Administration has a separate Code of Conduct, applicable to parliamentary staff, that came into effect in 2024. Among the principles enshrined in Art.4.b of the Code of Conduct for administration employees are fairness, equality, non-discrimination, and respect for dignity. Art. 11.3 states that “in all forms of communication, the use of offensive or mocking language, obscene gestures, the display of offensive or sexual material as well as sexual harassment is prohibited”. Art.20 outlines that violations of the Code and non-compliance is liable for disciplinary procedures enshrined in the Law on Civil Servants and Labour Code. HR Departments are to supervise the implementation of the Code according to Art.21.
46. Interviews with parliamentary staff and MPs revealed a common perception that gender equality is an issue for women MPs. Interviewees repeatedly shared that gender equality reforms have happened when a “strong woman” has pushed for them and when she leaves, then no further work is done.

²³ Violence against women during elections (VAWE) and gender bias in media coverage of the 2021 elections in Albania, 2021.

²⁴ Violence Against Women in Politics, UNDP Albania, November 2021.

Recommendations

In order to improve gender-sensitive parliamentary representation and ensure a gradual but ambitious and continuous progress towards gender-balanced representation and gender parity, on all levels of government and with the parliament as a whole, the following recommendations are put forward for consideration of the parliamentary leadership:

- A) Consider setting up a Speaker's Advisory Group on Gender Equality in Parliament, tasked to take the gender mainstreaming process forward, aiming at transforming the report's recommendations into a high-impact, realistic and result-oriented Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality in the Assembly. Such an action plan should include work on further temporary special measures that would encourage advancement related to women's full and equal political participation aiming at achieving gender parity (50/50);
- B) Review the existing Rules of Procedure, in line with Recommendation 5 of the Kigali Declaration, and consider introducing:
 - a. Minimal and realistic representation targets for female and male MPs in all parliamentary working bodies and parliamentary delegations;
 - b. Minimal representation targets for leadership roles, including leadership of parliamentary working bodies;
- C) Establish the Parliament to act as one of the main democratic institutions in the political system promoting gender-sensitive participation on all levels and branches of governance. These could include, for example:
 - a. Reviewing existing legislative and non-legislative measures aimed at ensuring gender-balanced representation, aiming at taking additional steps in order to achieve gender parity (50/50 representation) in the Assembly and other representative bodies;
 - b. Running every year, a plenary session dedicated solely to the topic of gender equality advancement;
 - c. Strategically identifying ways to engage male MPs on gender equality advancement;
 - d. Preparing a welcome booklet for all new MPs and staff, which raises awareness on the importance of gender equality and provides diverse examples on how gender equality is to be taken into account for parliamentary representation, lawmaking and oversight²⁵;
 - e. Conducting an assessment on the art presented in the parliament's buildings, aiming at increased presence of art from female artists;
 - f. Running regular outreach and awareness-raising activities, promoting gender equality through recognition of gender equality achievements and champions, artistic and cultural activities or other initiatives in the parliament;
 - g. Establishing a 'gender equality' section on the web page of the parliament;

²⁵ See example of guide prepared for MPs in the Assembly in North Macedonia [Gender Matters! Manual for Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#), Assembly of North Macedonia and OSCE Mission to Skopje, 2021.

- D) Amend the Rules of Procedure to clearly and explicitly mandate one standing committee to take the lead on gender equality in lawmaking and parliamentary oversight. In recognition also of the workload of the existing standing committees, the parliament may want to consider setting up a separate Committee on Gender Equality, as a permanent body, empowering it to mainstream gender equality into legislation, conduct gender-sensitive oversight, foster connections with civil society organisations working on gender equality, and other key tasks, with the aim of complying with Recommendation 4 of the Kigali Declaration.
- E) Consider establishing other forms of informal MPs' co-operation on gender equality advancement, including those involving male MPs²⁶. Such informal cooperation could include the following:
- a. Smaller thematic cross-party gender equality groups/caucuses, which would include both women and men MPs based on their interest in diverse gender-related themes such as gender equality in politics, violence against women, or women's economic empowerment. There can be multiple of those smaller thematic MP groups;
 - b. A 'Men Engage' cross-party parliamentary group, which can bring on board male MPs interested in advancing gender equality and acting as male allies and critical actors for gender equality, in line with Recommendation 6 of the Kigali Declaration;
- F) Kick off a cross-party dialogue aiming at identifying formal and informal measures that can be taken in order to ensure a broader representation of underrepresented groups, including of women and men of underrepresented age groups, with disabilities and of ethnic minority background. Consider conducting an assessment/audit, on how accessible and inclusive the parliament is towards women and men with disabilities, and members of other historically under-represented groups.
- G) Consider amending the Law on Political Parties, aiming at encouraging political parties to develop multi-year action plans that contain measures (such as training and temporary special measures) to promote gender equality and ensure balanced representation in their bodies. They should also regularly compile and publish sex-disaggregated data on the composition of their bodies;
- H) Review the implementation of Code of Conduct, applicable to members of parliament, with a view to prevent and address gender-based discrimination and violence, including violence against women in politics in all its forms, in line with Recommendation 10 of the Kigali Declaration. Update the guide to the Code of Conduct so that it comprehensively addresses all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination, including for example further guidance on sexual harassment procedures²⁷.
- I) Intensify activities related to the awareness raising, among MPs and staff, on gender equality issues, gender-based discrimination and violence against women,

²⁶ Point 6: "engage men MPs and other men active in the parliamentary ecosystem to act as allies for gender equality, including by co-sponsoring bills, initiatives and actions with women MPs, across the legislative, oversight and representation fields", [Kigali Declaration](#) on Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world. Endorsed by the 145th IPU Assembly, Kigali, 15 October 2022.

²⁷ ODIHR has published a practical and hand-on toolkit on how to address violence against women in politics in all its forms. The tool 2 provides an overview of good practice on how parliaments can set up effective policies and mechanisms. See more in [Addressing Violence against Women in Politics In the OSCE Region: Toolkit](#), ODIHR, 2022.

aiming at making such offers comprehensive and regularly offered, according to obligations within the Law on Gender Equality in Society.

- J) Consider conducting regular (ideally on annual basis) perception and attitudes surveys among MPs and staff, aiming at better understanding barriers and challenges to full and equal participation of women and men. Use the results of the survey to advance rules, mechanisms and practices related to gender sensitivity;
- K) Introduce the monitoring of sex-disaggregated data when it comes to participation practices and start issuing publicly available reports. Based on the conducted data, assess if there is a need for additional measures to be taken, aiming at making the parliament a gender-balanced institution.
- L) Implement more measures for MPs and staff with caring responsibilities, such as childcare facilities, family rooms, financial assistance for parliamentarians for childcare, and alternative voting arrangements, in line with Recommendation 9 of the Kigali Declaration.

DIMENSION 2: GENDER-SENSITIVE LAWMAKING

47. Legislation has a profound impact on everyday life, on people's rights and livelihoods. It is thus fundamental that laws are of good quality, meaning that they should be consistent, clear and intelligible, foreseeable, transparent, accessible, human rights-compliant, effective, non-discriminatory, gender-responsive and reflective of diverse groups in society, both in terms of wording and in practice, once implemented. All interested parties and stakeholders should have the opportunity to access the lawmaking process, to be informed about it and to meaningfully participate and contribute. Consultations are one means of interacting with the public, in addition to information-sharing and participation, the latter implying greater involvement. Different groups and individuals, especially those who may be affected by the draft law, as well as stakeholder organizations should be identified early and included from the initial policymaking phase and throughout the lawmaking process. They should be empowered to be able to take part adequately in the process²⁸.
48. The importance of incorporating a gender perspective into lawmaking processes has been emphasised in numerous international standards and OSCE human dimension commitments, which Albania has committed to. Specifically, Albania is bound by the 1995 Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, that stresses the importance of mechanisms for gender equality and advocate for a fundamental shift in the approach to gender equality, emphasising the integration of gender perspectives into the creation of public policies and of legislation, and equal gender participation in decision-making processes. The IPU Kigali Declaration (recommendation 7) advises parliaments to ensure that gender sensitivity, gender equality and gender mainstreaming and budgeting guide all of a parliament's work at all times²⁹.
49. The 1997 Resolution of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defines gender mainstreaming as: "The process of accessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality".
50. The international commitment to gender mainstreaming in decision and policy-making has been transferred into national legislation. Art 4.4 of the Law on Gender Equality in Society outlined that "gender mainstreaming is the way to achieve gender equality by involving each gender's perspective in all the lawmaking, policy making, planning, budgeting, implementing and monitoring processes". In addition,

²⁸ See more on the guiding principles of democratic lawmaking and better laws on the ODIHR [Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws](#), 2024. Specifically, Principle 7 on Participation and Inclusiveness and Principle 12 on Equality and Non-discrimination. See also Sub-section 8 of the Guidelines on Gender and Diversity Considerations, as well as Annex I to the Guidelines on Selected International and Regional Instruments relevant for lawmaking in general.

²⁹ [Kigali Declaration](#), Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world. Endorsed by the 145th IPU Assembly, Kigali, 15 October 2022.

Art.12.3 states that the National Council on Gender Equality (the governmental institutional mechanism) is tasked with “ensuring gender mainstreaming in all fields, especially in the political, social, economic, and cultural ones”. Gender mainstreaming has been a strategic goal in both recent National Strategies on Gender Equality, however in the current strategy the objectives are: monitoring projects at the central level that had gender-responsive budgeting applied, supporting local government units to apply gender-sensitive budgeting, and strengthening the national gender equality mechanism.³⁰ The Gender Equality Index 2020 noted that gender mainstreaming had taken place in the process of drafting several laws, including: Law No. 22 “On Social Housing”, Law No.96 “On Protection of National Minorities in the Republic of Albania”, and Law No. 110 “On Notaries”.³¹

51. In 2020, the Conference of Chairpersons (the steering body of the Assembly) approved an Action Programme entitled “Towards a Gender Sensitive Parliament”. The Action Programme contains strategic priorities, such as: gender-sensitive legislation, monitoring gender-sensitivity, gender representation, gender equality bodies, and strategic planning of an action plan on gender sensitivity. During the on-site visit, interviews and focus group data revealed that the Action Programme appears to have only been implemented during the previous convocation of the Assembly and is no longer active.
52. The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan of the Assembly of Albania contains Strategic Objective I on improving the work of the process of reviewing and approving drafts in parliamentary committees and plenary sessions, including gender aspects and sustainable development goals. The Strategic Plan and its Action Plan include a gender approach in Section I for its implementation, which establishes the Action Programme Towards a Gender Sensitive Parliament” as the framework document, which will guide the Assembly in its work on gender equality. In the accompanying Action Plan, Objectives I.I.4, I.I.5, I.2.6, I.5.4 are on implementing priorities from the Action Programme. With the exception of the final objective, the Alliance of Women MPs and the, now non-existent, Sub-Committee on Gender Equality are mandated with implementing the objectives.³²
53. Temporary special measures are a central tool to advance so-called “equality of results”. By using temporary special measures in electoral legislation, Albania is addressing inequalities and aiming to abolish under-representation in all spheres of public, economic and social life. In the latest Concluding Observations, the CEDAW Committee recognized in Para. 19 that there are temporary special measures in place in Albania but remained concerned that the State party lacks “adequate understanding of the nature, scope and necessity of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating the substantive equality of women and men”. Temporary special measures are not just aimed towards increasing the numerical representation of women in parliament, but, according to CEDAW General Recommendation 25 para.22, also encompass: “A wide range of legislative,

³⁰ National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030, 2021.

³¹ Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania, 2020.

³² At the time of collecting data for the report, the Strategic Plan of the Assembly 2025-2030 was still in the drafting process. However, under the new Strategic Plan, within the strategic objective linked to effective and quality legislation and those related to the state budget, some of the main objectives also address gender issues. Similarly, in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategic Plan, specific measures are included to implement these objectives. A strategic priority is also the inclusion of marginalized groups, as well as providing support for policies that promote the inclusion of diverse communities in parliamentary processes.

executive, administrative and other regulatory instruments, policies, and practices, such as outreach or support programmes; allocation and/or reallocation of resources; preferential treatment; targeted recruitment; hiring and promotion; numerical goals connected with time frames [such as action plans]; and quota systems.”

54. Consequently, an assessment should be made on how temporary special measures could be considered and applied in future draft laws. The Rules of Procedure specify that any draft law must be accompanied by a report that contains the “economic, social and environmental impact and gender sensitivity” (Art.68.2.c). The European Commission noted that the standard EU ex-ante gender impact assessment tool has been adapted by the parliament to the Albanian context. The tool has a specific focus on mainstreaming gender equality into policies related to the EU internal market. But the Commission also reports that it is not regularly used.³³
55. Parliament does not have a checklist or other practical tools to assist with gender-sensitive legislative scrutiny. Based on the sample impact assessment reports provided by the Parliament from 2024, it does not appear that gender sensitivity is being systematically included in impact assessment reports. Gender sensitivity appears to be considered as an optional category under the broader umbrella category of “social impacts”. When gender is addressed, there is not a comprehensive overview of the gender impact of draft laws. All interviewees responded that gender impact assessments are not being systematically done.
56. When drafting laws, there appears to be a requirement to conduct public hearings in the committee stage in Art.36 of the Rules of Procedure. These hearings can include members of the Council of Ministers, representatives of state or public institutions, civil society or interest groups. In further guidelines in the Regulations for the Organization and Functioning of Open Activity of the Assembly of 2020, committee chairs are instructed to select for hearings “those interested parties from the public, directly affected by the law or draft law, or those who have sectoral expertise to access its quality”.³⁴ The Regulation also encourages public participation in the lawmaking process in Art. 4.
57. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection, in reporting as part of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2024, recalled that standing committees have specifically conducted hearings with Roma and Egyptian women and girls as well as young women and girls on topics such as gender discrimination, bullying, school violence, and gender-based violence. The Ministry additionally reported that gender analyses and gender impact assessments are regularly being used to prepare important national documents.³⁵
58. Art. 33 of the Regulations for the Organization and Functioning of Open Activity of the Assembly state that selecting civil society organizations (CSOs) for hearings, committee chairs must go through a gatekeeper: the co-ordinator for interest groups. The co-ordinator is responsible for informing CSOs about the draft laws currently being reviewed and discussed in standing committees, contacting interest groups for written opinions on draft laws on behalf of committees, conveying to standing committees the opinions and suggestions of CSOs, informing CSOs

³³ Albania 2023 Report, 2023.

³⁴ Regulations for the Organization and Functioning of Open Activity of the Assembly, Article 37.

³⁵ Comprehensive National-Level Review, 2024.

about their participation in hearings, and informing CSOs about adopted laws. Art.43 mandates the Assembly with keeping an Electronic Civil Society Registry as a database of CSOs, which the co-ordinator maintains. Committees can also address calls to CSOs who are not on the database. It should be noted that organizations are required to register in the data base on their own volition and that the Assembly has other proactive initiatives to reach out to CSOs.

59. According to Art.31 of the Regulation, the Assembly must publish a yearly report of all its collaborations with CSOs. In the report, sex-disaggregated data is published on participation in the work of committees across parliament but also on participation in individual committees. The 2023 report stated that out of the 1850 participants in committee meetings that year, 960 were women and 890 were men. In five out of eight committees, women participated more than men³⁶. However, from the report, there seems to be a fairly even representation of both genders.
60. According to data reported by the Assembly, the parliament does have formal relationships with academic gender experts, civil society organizations working on gender equality, and media outlets with a gender-focus. However, Annex I of the Assembly's report on collaborations with CSOs for 2023 only listed one civil society specifically focused on women, the Christian Women's Association of Albanian Women. Yet, 72% of those surveyed MPs and staff agreed or strongly agreed that parliament has a good co-operation with civil society organizations working on gender equality and human rights. It was not clear from the interviews and focus groups whether efforts are made to engage diverse groups of women in the parliamentary process.
61. In December 2023, an event entitled "No to Femicide" was organized under the auspices of the Speaker of the Assembly, with the support of UN Women and the General Rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The event was attended by MPs, government officials, international organizations, and representatives of CSOs.
62. There is one member of staff within the unit and services of parliament who works specifically on gender issues, a specialist (desk officer) for gender equality issues within the Parliamentary Committees Service. The role was recently established in June 2024 to act as an advisor and co-ordinator. This specialist is part of the Gender Equality Network of public administration officials. Interviewees raised that there needs to be more technical expertise available for committees. Advisors within the legal service are tasked with preparing memos on draft laws for committees, which should include gender considerations, but due to time constraints and workload, gender is often not addressed comprehensively. The Assembly, in particular, is working to review budget laws from the perspective of gender equality.
63. There are currently no regulations that legislation should be written in gender-sensitive language.
64. In 2012, the Council of Ministers published a decision "On Gender Mainstreaming in Mid-Term Budget Programming"³⁷. The Law "On Budget System Management in the Republic of Albania" was also amended in 2016 to include for the first time

³⁶ Women participated less than men in meetings of the Committee on National Security, the Committee on Production Activity, Trade and Environment, and the Committee on Education and Means of Public Information.

³⁷ [Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania, 2020.](#)

the concept of gender-sensitive budgeting as respect for gender equality was included as a functioning principle of the budget system in Art.4.e of the Law.

65. The European Commission reported that the application of gender-sensitive budgeting has continued to improve in Albania. In 2022, all standard budget instructions contained gender-responsive budgeting as a part of the criteria for expenditure and a gender budget statement was attached to the draft budget.³⁸
66. It is a legal requirement that sex-disaggregated data must be used when reviewing the budget and draft legislation. However, this is not followed in practice, according to interview and focus group data. Indeed, 36% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that gender consideration and sex-disaggregated data are not taken into account when reviewing the budget or new draft laws. 35% disagreed or strongly disagreed that parliament examines draft budget laws from a gender perspective.
67. The Law on Gender Equality affirms that the Minister for Health and Social Protection is responsible for establishing mechanisms to collect sex-disaggregated statistics in collaboration with the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) (Art.13). The Institute of Statistics currently produces sex-disaggregated data and publishes a yearly publication entitled “Women and Men in Albania” that is intended to assist policy makers, academics, members of civil society, and other users to analyse gender equality in society.³⁹ There is currently close cooperation between the Ministry of Health and INSTAT, holding working meetings with the National Gender Focal Point Network for the collection of data categorized according to gender.
68. The European Commission reported that the collection of sex-disaggregated data has improved in recent years. There is a new official statistical programme to collect and analyse certain sex-disaggregated data. The Commission concluded that gaps still remain and there is a need to collect disaggregated data for certain groups.⁴⁰ Indeed, two of the CEDAW Committee’s recommendations, Para.16.b. and Para.50, in the latest Concluding Observations were on ensuring, promoting, and building capacity for the collection of disaggregated data.

Recommendations

In order to improve gender-sensitive law-making practices, including the cooperation with civil society organisations, and to ensure that gender impact assessments are conducted in a meaningful and systematic way, following recommendations are put forward for the consideration of the parliamentary leadership:

- M) Review the existing rules and practises to reflect gender equality and diversity perspectives, specifically those related to the ex-ante gender impact assessment of draft legislation, aiming at gradually introducing a more comprehensive approach to analysis based on sex-disaggregated data, in line with Recommendation 8 of the Kigali Declaration. Consider:
 - a. Reviewing the Law on Gender Equality in Society, other legislation and internal rules of the Government, aiming at setting stronger and clearer rules for gender mainstreaming in policy development by government authorities,

³⁸ Albania 2023 Report, 2023.

³⁹ Comprehensive National-Level Review, 2024.

⁴⁰ Albania 2023 Report, 2023.

- including an explicit obligation to conduct gender impact assessments before submit draft laws to the parliament;
- b. Amending the Rules of Procedure, strengthening existing and introducing within them new provisions related to gender-sensitive lawmaking, including related to the state budget;
 - c. Introducing introductory, regular and advanced capacity development initiatives, aiming at strengthening the capacities of parliamentary staff related to gender equality and gender mainstreaming, including on gender impact assessments, all with the overall goal to produce gender-sensitive laws;
 - d. Producing hands-on and step-by-step guidelines for all parliamentary committees as well as holding orientation seminars, at the beginning of every convocation, for all members of the parliament, on gender equality, gender mainstreaming, gender-sensitive legislation and gender impact assessments, aiming at raising the awareness of all MPs on their role on how they can contribute to the advancement of gender equality in the society through an advanced gender sensitive law-making process;
- N) Expand staffing capacities in the parliamentary administration, aiming at setting up a gender equality and gender mainstreaming unit/team;
- O) Strengthen co-operation with government bodies, including the state statistical body and the Ministry in charge for gender equality policy, aiming at advancing sex-disaggregated data collection and an overall more proactive gender mainstreaming approach by ministries and government bodies, especially when preparing laws and other documents for the consideration of the Assembly;
- P) Introduce rules and practices mandating the usage of gender-sensitive legal language. In particular, ensure that legal drafters adopt a gender-inclusive approach when formulating legal provisions in order to ensure that laws address all persons equally, regardless of their gender and other characteristics. The male linguistic gender should not be considered as the standard norm;

DIMENSION 3: GENDER-SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

69. Gender-sensitive oversight involves overseeing and monitoring the implementation of legislation, budgets, policies, programmes and other actions, including those taken or not taken by the government, from a gender perspective. This assists parliaments with “exploring and addressing the potential and real impacts on men and women of laws, policies, programmes and budgets to ensure the impacts are fair and the laws are effective”.⁴¹ Gender mainstreaming in the oversight function of national parliaments “involves asking questions about the impact that government policies, programmes, budgetary allocations and expenditures will have or have had on women and girls as well as on men and boys. It assesses whether gender-blind or gender-biased assumptions have been made about the beneficiaries of a process or policy, who the process or policy target is, and whether all groups will benefit equitably”.⁴²
70. Art. 77.2 does give to the Assembly the right and obligation, upon request of one-fourth of its members, to designate an investigatory committee to review a particular issue. The Rules of Procedure outline some of parliament’s activities in terms of oversight, such as reviewing the implementation of the state budget (Art.19) and monitoring the work of the Council of Ministers in relation to the implementation of the EU integration process (Art.103.1). Art.18 mandates standing committees with “...carrying out studies of the laws in force, following the implementation of laws and checking the activity of the ministries and other central bodies...” One interviewee stated that MPs are not aware of Art. 18 or the Assembly’s role in oversight.
71. According to interview data collected during the on-site visit, the Conference of Chairpersons has recently approved a methodology on post-legislative scrutiny.⁴³
72. The Parliament reported that the Alliance of Women MPs and the Subcommittee for Human Rights are most responsible for gender-sensitive oversight. They also reported that all parliamentary bodies are responsible for gender-sensitive oversight. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that voluntary bodies like the Alliance, which are not equal to permanent parliamentary committees, should not be regarded as replacement of the committees, but only as complimentary.
73. The Subcommittee for Sustainable Development, within the Committee for Economy and Finance, is listed by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection as being responsible for the realization of sustainable development objectives as well as specifically the Beijing Platform for Action.⁴⁴ There is not one committee mandated with overseeing the implementation of CEDAW but Art.19.1 of the Rules of Procedure do state that: “the field of responsibility of all parliamentary committees also includes issues related to the constant development of the United Nations and the implementation of commitments deriving from it”.
74. Art.35 of the Rules of the Procedure allows Committees to hold public hearings to determine issues related to the implementation of legislation in a given area. These

⁴¹ [Gender-Sensitive Scrutiny: A Guide to More Effective Law-making and Oversight](#), International IDEA, 2022.

⁴² [Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament](#), ODIHR, 2021, page 55.

⁴³ Since the time of data collection for the report, a methodology for post-legislative scrutiny has been approved in decision no. 6/2005 alongside amendments to the Rules of Procedure.

⁴⁴ [Comprehensive National-Level Review](#), 2024.

hearings can be held at any time and committees can request external assistance in preparing studies on monitoring the implementation of certain laws, according to Art.36. Art.103.3 of the Rules of Procedure asserts that an ex-post examination of legislation approximated with EU legislation must be conducted within three years of their implementation. This would include the Law on Gender Equality in Society and the Law on Protection Against Discrimination.⁴⁵

75. The Assembly reported that they are in the initial stages of undertaking post-legislative scrutiny. The process has started for two laws.
76. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection published that between 2019 and 2023 a series of gender analyses, gender evaluations, and consultative meetings were carried out on the topic of revising legislation or preparing strategies and actions plans for all critical areas of the Beijing Platform. It also reported that the parliament has recently conducted a parliamentary review of the implementation of the principle of equality by central, local, and independent institutions.⁴⁶
77. The CEDAW Committee noted that Albania has adopted a framework of laws and policies to achieve the substantive equality of women and men. However, the Committee expressed concern that the effectiveness of this legislation is limited and there is a need for monitoring and evaluation in Para.11.

Recommendations

In order to improve gender-sensitive oversight practices and to ensure that gender equality considerations become part of the regular committee work, the following recommendations are put forward for the consideration of the parliamentary leadership:

- Q) Amend the Rules of Procedure to clearly and explicitly mandate one standing committee to take the lead on gender equality in lawmaking and parliamentary oversight. In recognition also of the workload of the existing standing committees, the parliament may want to consider setting up a separate Committee on Gender Equality as a permanent body, empowering it with mainstreaming gender into legislation, conducting gender-sensitive oversight, fostering connections with women's civil society organisations, and other key tasks, in line with Recommendation 4 of the Kigali Declaration. The mandated committee may consider:
 - a. Mapping new and regular oversight activities, initiated by the parliament and going beyond the consideration of the regular reports submitted by the government;
 - b. Selecting one existing law each year for systematic gender equality review as part of a post-legislative oversight exercise conducted independently by the parliament. This process should be carried out in collaboration with academia and women's NGOs;

⁴⁵ The Rules of Procedure were amended by decision no. 6/2025 to include post-legislative scrutiny as part of the parliamentary oversight function of the Assembly's committees.

⁴⁶ [Comprehensive National-Level Review, 2024.](#)

- c. Stepping up its role, taking the lead in monitoring the implementation of international conventions, such as CEDAW, and the recommendations arising from treaty bodies, like the CEDAW Committee. The committee should integrate this into their annual plan of work and remind the government in case of delays;
- R) Develop a guide, manual or booklet with good practices and ideas on how committees can integrate a gender equality perspective into oversight activities;
- S) Carry out a comprehensive review on the implementation and potential shortcomings of the Law on Gender Equality in Society and consider working on amending the law, based on review observations and international standards, CEDAW General Recommendation defining gender equality as 50:50. ODIHR's service line offering legal reviews of legislation assessing its adherence to OSCE commitments and international human rights standards might help in such a comprehensive review process⁴⁷.
- T) Through the parliamentary oversight function, aim at strengthening the governmental institutional mechanism for the advancement of women and of gender equality, as the central body for gender equality policy in the government.
- U) Apply a proactive approach to civil society cooperation, aiming at involving civil society representatives into the application of the diverse set of potential oversight tools that can be applied related to gender-sensitive oversight.
- V) Use national gender equality expertise, including in academia, in the activities of the parliament, complementing in that way the cooperation with the governmental bodies in charge for gender equality.

⁴⁷ Learn more on ODIHR's legislative review service line, available to national parliaments and governments, in the following factsheet: [Requesting Legislative Assistance from ODIHR](#)

6. TAKING THE GENDER AUDIT FORWARD: SPEAKER'S ADVISORY GROUP ON GENDER EQUALITY IN PARLIAMENT

Gender audits are just the beginning, one a milestone in the institutional transformation process of a parliament. In order to build upon the conclusions and recommendations from the gender audit report, one **key recommendation** of this report is central: the setup of a Speaker's Advisory Group on Gender Equality in Parliament⁴⁸ after the publishing of the Participatory Gender Audit report.

The Advisory Group is to take the process forward, aiming at transforming the report's recommendations into a new high-impact, realistic and result-orientation Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality in the Assembly, following on from the Action Programme "Towards a Gender Sensitive Parliament" (see chapter 7). This aligns with Recommendation 2 of the Kigali Declaration: to create a gender-balanced steering committee to follow up on the findings and recommendations of gender audits.

Who should be part of the Advisory Group?

As parliaments are organisations that apply horizontal and collective decision-making, it is central that all parliamentary political parties appoint (two) members to the Advisory Group. Ideally, those members should not be of the same sex. The Advisory Group should ideally also have representatives of the parliamentary service, under the leadership of the Secretary General. The Advisory Group should meet on regular basis, aiming at keeping the 'gender sensitive parliaments' momentum for change alive and producing concrete results, as per the recommendations from the audit report.

What role should it play?

The central role of the Advisory Group is to ensure that gender audit report recommendations are transformed into impact-oriented activities. Ideally, the parliament should develop a new multi-year gender equality action plan for the implementation of the recommendations, and the role of the Advisory Group is to ensure swift approval of the gender action plan, its implementation and regular review. The Advisory Group should report regularly to the entire parliament.

What should be tasks of the Advisory Group members?

The members of the Advisory Group serve as a link between the parliamentary political parties and the parliament leadership. Members are to advocate for the support to concrete solutions among the members of the party factions they belong too, but also to be the voice of the factions in the Advisory Group.

⁴⁸ See a good practice example from Sweden: [Gender equality work in the Riksdag](#)

7. TEMPLATE FOR THE ACTION PLAN ON THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE ASSEMBLY

The below table presents an example of an action plan which the Assembly may use as a template to develop a full, multi-year action plan on the promotion of gender equality in the parliament. The action plan would systematize the implementation of all or a selection of the recommendations provided in the report on the participatory gender assessment.

Objective 1: To continuously advance the representation of women in parliament and develop a gender-sensitive working environment for all women and men working in parliament

Activity	Indicator of success	Baseline and target	Parliamentary body or unit in charge	Time frame

Objective 2: To strengthen policies, rules and practices on gender-sensitive law-making

Activity	Indicator of success	Baseline and target	Parliamentary body or unit in charge	Time frame

Objective 3: To advance the role of parliament in overseeing government actions related to gender equality enhancement in all areas of life

Activity	Indicator of success	Baseline and target	Parliamentary body or unit in charge	Time frame

Appendix 1. Results of the Perception and Attitudes Survey

The parliament conducted a perception and attitudes survey among MPs and parliamentary staff (October 2024- February 2025). 134 MPs and staff members responded to the entire survey. 76.9% of the respondents have been women. 20.1% of the respondents were MPs, 77.6% were parliamentary staff and 2.2% were political staff. Respondents were asked to rate the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

	1	2	3	4	5
GENDER-SENSITIVE REPRESENTATION					
Women and men should both have at least 40% representation in the Assembly.	13	7	24	33	57
Parliament needs to introduce representation targets for women and men in the parliamentary leadership.	11	7	23	39	54
Parliament needs to introduce representation targets for women and men in the appointment of the committee chairs.	12	7	25	44	46
A minimal representation of female and male MPs should be guaranteed for all committees.	9	10	16	38	61
The work conditions at the Assembly allow MPs to balance work and family obligations.	7	21	40	29	37
Sexist language is used in parliament.	71	18	18	9	18
Female and male MPs should receive gender equality induction training after every election.	9	14	22	35	54
MPs treat parliamentary staff with respect, free of sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination.	5	1	18	46	64
The parliament is recognized publicly as a central institution that promotes gender equality.	3	5	22	37	67
Male and female staff have equal access to family friendly working arrangements.	7	10	29	46	42
Family caring responsibilities are a barrier for staff in undertaking certain roles in parliament.	25	18	34	36	21
Family caring responsibilities are a barrier for staff in obtaining promotion.	39	20	34	25	16
GENDER-SENSITIVE LAWMAKING					
Gender considerations and sex-disaggregated data are not taken into account when reviewing the budget or new laws.	24	22	40	25	23
Parliament examines the draft budget law from a gender perspective.	27	25	35	27	20
Parliament needs to introduce obligatory gender impact assessments for draft legislation.	13	19	45	26	31
The parliamentary service and parliamentary staff serve as a resource on gender equality.	11	14	42	31	36
Parliament has good co-operation with women's civil society organisations and those working on gender equality and human rights.	6	5	27	39	57
GENDER-SENSITIVE OVERSIGHT					
There is clear leadership in parliament on gender equality through a designated committee.	15	24	41	23	31
Gender is mainstreamed into oversight activities such as questions and parliamentary debate.	8	26	46	29	25
There are effective links between parliament and women's civil society organisations when conducting oversight activities.	4	8	27	44	51
Parliament effectively monitors government compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other international gender equality and women's rights treaties.	6	11	27	45	45

Appendix 2. Assessment Areas

As per ODIHR's participatory gender assessment of parliaments methodology.

The full methodology is available in the publication:
"Participatory Gender Audits. A step-by-step guidance document for OSCE Parliaments"
ODIHR, August 2022, <<https://www.osce.org/odihr/524226>>

1.1 Gender-sensitive representation

Subject	Issues
Electing women to parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proportion and numbers of women and men in parliament in recent elections• Barriers women face when running for parliament• Actions by political parties to improve gender equality and representation of women, including tackling violence against women in politics• The electoral system and temporary special measures in electoral legislation
Leadership roles in parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proportion of each sex in leadership roles such as speakers, committee chairs or in the parliamentary administration
Participation in parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation by sex, including speaking, asking questions and being members of committees
Caring responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The infrastructure for MPs and staff with caring responsibilities, including sitting times and the provision of child care
Dignity and respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal mechanisms — codes of conduct and regulations including policies on discrimination and harassment• Cultural issues — stereotypes and demeaning behaviour• Sharing responsibility for equality by women and men
Parliamentary staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Representation of each sex in the parliament's staff, including in leadership positions, and whether roles reflect gender-stereotypical views of men and women

1.2 Gender-sensitive lawmaking

Subject	Issues
Gender sensitivity in lawmaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to relevant sex-disaggregated data• Availability of a checklist or other practical tools for gender-sensitive legislative scrutiny• Requirements for gender analysis and gender impact assessments• Requirement for consultations with beneficiaries of laws, including civil society organizations, representing different interests and groups• Use of gender-sensitive language, i.e., a gender-neutral and/or gender-inclusive approach when formulating legal provisions, and compliance with human rights and gender-equality standards in the content/substance of the laws

Gender sensitivity in reviewing the budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to relevant sex-disaggregated data and also disaggregated by numerous other personal characteristics, such as age, ethnicity, race, religion or disability • Requirements for gender analysis and gender impact assessments • The rights and needs of women and men, and of groups representing minorities, people with disabilities and others, are reflected in supporting budgetary documentation
Gender impact assessment expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of in-house expertise to help ensure that lawmaking activities support the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination • Availability of external expertise to complement in-house expertise

1.3 Gender-sensitive oversight

Subject	Issue
Parliamentary bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence, format and mandate of parliamentary bodies in charge of gender equality
Gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-equality considerations in questions, debates and committee work and in diverse forms of oversight activities, to protect law drafters against unconscious bias and to ensure laws cover everyone equally • Availability of sex-disaggregated data • Gender balance in public hearings
Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of in-house expertise to ensure that activities support the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination • Availability of external expertise to complement in-house expertise
International standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring compliance with international standards and norms, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Appendix 3. Excerpt from IPU Kigali Declaration

Parliamentarians from around the world have adopted the Kigali Declaration “[Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world](#)” at the 145th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda.

The full Declaration is available at the following link
<<https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2022-10/ipu-member-parliaments-commit-accelerating-gender-equality>>

Here is an excerpt of the ten commitments at the end of the Declaration:

“Our commitment to gender-sensitive parliaments today must be more ambitious than it was 10 years ago. Looking forward, we pledge the following 10 actions to make many more parliaments gender-sensitive over the next 10 years:

1. Assess the level of gender-sensitivity of our parliaments twice to ensure progress in-between the two milestones.
2. Create a gender-balanced steering committee to follow up on the findings and recommendations of the gender sensitivity assessments that has the power, resources, and mandate to lead reforms.
3. Recognize the individual differences among women and prioritize the inclusion of underrepresented groups such as young women, indigenous women and women with disabilities.
4. Create, resource and empower a gender equality committee or similar body which can effectively hold government and parliament to account, and a women’s caucus that can effectively support women MPs in their parliamentary work.
5. Adopt formal rules to establish gender-balance across all parliamentary leadership positions, ensure the parity of participation of women and men across all parliamentary activities, and prohibit single-sex committees and groups.
6. Engage men MPs and other men active in the parliamentary ecosystem to act as allies for gender equality, including by co-sponsoring bills, initiatives and actions with women MPs, across the legislative, oversight and representation fields.
7. Ensure that gender sensitivity, gender equality and gender mainstreaming and budgeting guide all of a parliament’s work at all times.
8. Conduct gender audits of legislative, budgetary and oversight actions but also of initiatives aiming to introduce or reform, inter alia, parliamentary technology, measures to make parliaments greener, initiatives to engage citizens in the work of parliament, and implement the respective recommendations from such audits.
9. Become caring parliaments by providing fully for the caring needs of men and women MPs and staff as they carry out their parliamentary duties.
10. Introduce stringent policies with the objective of zero tolerance of violence against women, sexual harassment and bullying in parliament, and establish independent and efficient grievance procedures with strong sanctions.”